



News for Immediate Release

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Second 2012 Snow Survey Scheduled for February 1

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct this winter's second snow survey on February 1.

One focus of attention will be the manual survey scheduled for 11 a.m. off Highway 50 near Echo Summit. This and other manual surveys up and down the state as well as electronic readings from remote sensors will determine the water content in the snowpack.

Electronic readings today indicate that water content in the statewide snowpack is just 38 percent of normal. That is 23 percent of the average April 1 reading, when the snowpack is normally at its peak before the spring melt. Still, this is an improvement over results of this winter's January 3 survey, which recorded snowpack water content at 19 percent of normal for that date, and only 7 percent of the average April 1 reading.

"Conditions so far this winter continue to be much drier than we would like," said DWR Director Mark Cowin. "We are fortunate that most of the state continues to benefit from good reservoir storage carried over from last winter, and we remain optimistic for a return to a normal weather pattern between now and spring to sustain adequate water deliveries."

Lake Oroville in Butte County, the State Water Project's principal storage reservoir, is at 107 percent of average for the date (72 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity), Lake Shasta north of Redding, the federal Central Valley Project's largest reservoir with a capacity of 4.5 million acre-feet, is at 100 percent of its normal storage level for the date (68 percent of capacity). San Luis Reservoir in Merced County, an important storage reservoir south of the Delta, is at 121 percent of average for the date (96 percent of its capacity of 2,027,840 acre-feet). San Luis is a critically important source of water for both the State Water Project and Central Valley Project when pumping from the Delta is restricted or interrupted.

(An acre-foot is 325,851 gallons, enough to cover one acre to a depth of one foot.)

In addition to better-than-average storage, it is expected that storms later this winter will deepen the snowpack and increase runoff into the state's streams, reservoirs and aquifers.

Conditions between now and early spring will determine the amount of State Water Project (SWP) water DWR will be able to deliver this calendar year. The initial estimate is that DWR will be able to deliver 60 percent of the slightly more than 4 million acre-feet of water requested by the 29 public agencies that distribute SWP water to more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland.

The initial delivery estimate for calendar year 2011 was only 25 percent of requested SWP water. As winter took hold, a near-record snowpack and heavy rains resulted in deliveries of 80 percent of requests in 2011. The final allocation was 50 percent in 2010, 40 percent in 2009, 35 percent in 2008, and 60 percent in 2007. The last 100 percent allocation -- difficult to achieve even in wet years because of pumping restrictions to protect Delta fish species -- was in 2006.

DWR and cooperating agencies conduct manual snow surveys around the first of the month from January to May. The closely-monitored snowpack normally provides approximately one-third of the water for California's households, industries and farms as it melts in spring and summer.

The news media is invited to accompany DWR snow surveyors near Echo Summit on February 1. The location is Phillips Station at Highway 50 and Sierra at Tahoe

Road approximately 90 miles east of Sacramento. Measurements will begin at 11 a.m. Reporters and photographers driving to the site should park along Highway 50, and are advised to bring snowshoes or cross-country skis. Results should be available by 1 p.m.

Electronic snowpack readings are available on the Internet at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>

Electronic reservoir level readings may be found at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action>

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.